

Rep. Peter Welch, joined by Governor Peter Shumlin and business and community leaders, welcomed the nation's top rail official to Rutland Monday as he continued to push for federal funding of Vermont's Western Corridor high-speed rail project. With the rejection of high-speed rail funds by several states in recent months, Vermont's congressional delegation has been pushing for those funds to be reallocated to Vermont's Western Corridor project, which runs from Rutland to Burlington.

At the event today was Deputy Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration Karen Rae, who was invited by Welch after the two spoke about Vermont's Western Corridor project earlier this month. Welch invited businesspeople, community members and state and local officials to explain to Rae the importance of rail to Vermont's economy and the potential benefits that will come with improving the passenger and freight rail line along the state's western corridor. As Deputy Administrator for the Federal Railroad Administration, Rae is tasked with developing and implementing the Obama Administration's freight and passenger rail policy.

"High-speed rail is a real priority for Vermont businesses and local communities," Welch said. "A strong rail network will not only tie entrepreneurs, small businesses and towns to regional hubs like New York, Albany, Boston and Montreal, it will bring people from those places to Vermont. Vermonters are ready and willing to put this money to good use creating good jobs, improving our transportation infrastructure and expanding travel and tourism businesses."

"Vermont is working closely with other states in the northeast and Quebec to make sure that

reliable and efficient service is available to travelers and rail shippers," Shumlin said. "The extension of the Ethan Allen Express up to Burlington is a direct and tangible next step that will be followed by links to Manchester and Bennington. This project and the planned extension of the AMTRAK Vermonter into Montreal are major steps in the transformation of our passenger rail system."

"The Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing and the University of Vermont Tourism Data Center determined that on average each domestic day visitor to Vermont spends \$107 per person and each domestic overnight visitor to Vermont spends \$292 per person," said Tom Donahue, Executive Vice President of the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce. "We are convinced that this proposed investment will have a powerful effect on Vermont's tourism and manufacturing economy now and long into the future."

Also joining Welch, Shumlin, Rae and Donahue at the event were Vermont Secretary of Transportation Brian Searles, Vermont Agency of Transportation Rail Director Joe Flynn, State Senators Peg Flory, Dick Mazza and Bob Hartwell, State Representatives Herb Font-Russell, Charles Bohi, Diane Lanpher and Patrick Brennan, Representatives from the offices of Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders, Executive Director of the Rutland Economic Development Corp. Jamie Stewart, President of Westminster Cracker Larry Cirina, Plant Manager for OMYA Pierre Masuy, President of the Addison County Chamber of Commerce Andy Mayer and Vice President of the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce Tim Shea.